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NEWS RELEASE

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Prepared remarks of U.S. Attorney Eric Melgren Child pornography press conference Thursday, Nov. 18, 2004

Note: U.S. Attorney may deviate from prepared remarks.

We are announcing today that a federal grand jury in Wichita has returned 15 separate, unrelated indictments involving charges of child pornography and traveling in interstate commerce to engage in sex with a minor.

The purpose of our press conference is not simply to announce these 15 indictments, though, significant as they may be. Instead, we are using this occasion to draw attention to a pervasive and serious problem in our communities, which has as often as not remained below the radar.

Child pornography is a crime that is difficult to talk about. Most citizens have no idea of the scope or nature of the problem of child pornography. Those who do, principally prosecutors, law enforcement investigators, and social workers, find it difficult to talk about. It is difficult to talk about because it is difficult to accurately explain child pornography with words, and it is difficult to talk about because it is difficult to calmly talk about the effect of child pornography.

We cannot show you the cruel and loathsome images of child pornography that our investigators have collected in recent months. Each one is an enduring record of an act of sexual abuse against a child and each time such images are seen outside of a courtroom or the context of a criminal investigation it is another violation of the human rights of the victims.

Even in words, we can only hint at the despicable, repulsive images in which children, many of whom have not reached the age of puberty, have been used for the sexual pleasure of adults. The fact is that most child pornography offenders have in their collections images of victims younger than 12. The typical age of children depicted in child pornography is from six to 12, according to Protectourkids.com, but photos of victims younger than 6 are often seen, including among today's indictments.

Tens of thousands of new images are appearing on the Internet every week. They depict a nightmarish world: objects being inserted into the vaginas of grade school girls, small boys on their knees before grown men who force them to perform oral sex, naked children on their backs on dirty mattresses, their spindly, bruised legs forced wide apart for the camera to get a better look. These are not things most of us want to see. At the same time, these are not things that we as parents and law abiding citizens we can afford to ignore.

In announcing today that federal indictments have been returned on 15 defendants, our purpose is to send a warning.

GROWTH OF THE PROBLEM

The Internet is making our children more vulnerable. A new breed of sexual predator is prowling the Internet, lurking in chat rooms where children and teenagers congregate. He's more than a hunter – he is a provider. He produces and distributes the child pornography that collectors feed upon.

Compared to the predator, these collectors are timid folk. They spend hours and days alone at their computers, nibbling on the morsels that the predator leaves behind. They must hide their prizes but they collect them with care, organizing, indexing and annotating.

Law enforcement officers have done a good job of driving child pornography off the shelves of adult bookstores and out of the U.S. mails. The pedophiles and child pornographers have survived, though, by fleeing to the back alleys of cyberspace, where they know their way around and it's easy to operate anonymously.

Maybe your children haven't met these predators yet. Or maybe they have. One in five children

ages 10-17 has received an unwanted sexual solicitation on the Internet. In the most serious cases, the messages came from adult offenders seeking children for sex. This is according to research by the University of New Hampshire and the National Center for Missing and Exploited Children.

The rising tide of pornography and sexual exploitation of children on the Internet is changing the way federal law enforcement agencies operate. Filing charges against offenders has become so routine that it seems sometimes that no one pays any attention. The Innocent Images National Initiative is a component of the FBI's Cyber Crimes Program. Founded in 1995, its mission is to combat the proliferation of child pornography and child sexual exploitation facilitated by an online computer. Between fiscal years 1996 and 2003, there was an increase of 2,050 percent in the number of cases opened (from 113 to 2,440), according to testimony to Congress on May 6, 2004 by FBI Deputy Assistant Keith L. Lourdeau.

USES FOR CHILD PORNOGRAPHY

It is a sad reality that FBI agents such as Ken Lanning have spent their careers trying to keep child pornographers and child sexual predators from getting the upper hand. Along the way, they've been exposed to tens of thousands of hellish images of abused children and met scores of offenders whose wicked habits they have been forced to learn.

Child predators frequently have large collections of child pornography, says Lanning, who now is retired and works as a consultant. One of his recent publications on the subject is called "Child Molesters: A behavioral analysis." Lanning describes four common uses that offenders make of child pornography. They are:

- To sexually arouse the collector.
- To lower the inhibitions of a child. Pedophiles use pornographic images to seduce children, to groom them with the idea that sex between children and adults is OK if no one knows.
- To blackmail a child. Sexual predators use child pornography to control their victims. The threat of telling a child's parents or the authorities about the photos of a child can help keep a victim silent.
- And to serve as a medium of exchange among pedophiles. Collecting child pornography validates the behavior and provides incentives for, those who produce it. Collectors have set up networks to compare notes, brag about their collections and shop for more images.

CONNECTION BETWEEN CHILD PORN AND CHILD PREDATOR

Lanning and other investigators say they see no clear line of distinction drawn between child porn collectors and sexual predators who abuse children.

In fact, Lanning says, pedophiles almost always collect child pornography. Lanning advises investigators to view the presence of child pornography on an offender's hard drive as a good reason to inquire very carefully into that offender's behavior with children. Pornography is illegal, Lanning often points out, without there being any evidence that an offender has had sexual contact with a child. But he believes that a collection of child pornography is a strong indicator of the way an offender thinks and feels. Lanning explains it this way: "An offender's pornography collection," he says, "is the single best indicator of what he WANTS to do."

Many law enforcement experts believe that the validation and the almost constant stimulation afforded to sex offenders by the Internet puts minors at a greater risk for sexual exploitation. By creating a demand for new material, the Internet also creates a demand for more victims. That fact was cited in January 2002 in a Juvenile Justice Bulletin issued by the U.S. Department of Justice.

Also in 2002, Michael J. Heimbach of the FBI's Criminal Investigation Division testified before Congress about the results of Operation Candyman, which uncovered 7,200 child pornography traffickers worldwide. He said this: "Our experience in the investigation of these crimes signals a strong correlation between child pornography offenders and molesters of children."

What do we know about the connection between child pornography and child sexual abuse? Not enough, of course. But in 2000, Andres Hernandez, a psychologist and director of the Sex Offender Treatment Program for the Federal Bureau of Prisons, reported the results of a study of inmates in the program. He found that 76 percent of offenders convicted of child pornography/traveler crimes said they had committed contact sexual offenses. That group of offenders reported an average of 30.5 contact sexual offense victims." This was reported in January 2002 in a Juvenile Justice Bulletin issued by the U.S. Department of Justice.

Another thing that Lanning and other investigators have learned from experience is that child pornographers and child molesters don't usually look like the monsters their actions make them seem to be. The frightening truth is that they usually don't look any different than anyone else. According to the FBI, child predators have been known to work in occupations that give them direct access to children. In 2002, for instance, the FBI's Operation Candyman identified 7,000 email addresses associated with online E-groups that were transmitting child pornography. The occupations of subjects that were arrested included school bus driver, photographer, law enforcement officer, clergyman and teacher's aide.

Likewise, there's nothing clearly visible about the differences between child pornography collectors and child sexual predators. Law enforcement officers report that some of the most dangerous child sex offenders they have arrested were initially viewed as simple collectors and it was only after they were searched that evidence of physical contact with victims was obtained.

The frightening thing is that child pornography collectors and producers, as well as child predators, usually know how to blend in. It's very easy on the Internet, where a predator can change his shape at will. A predator usually takes the time to get to know his prey. Did she sound bored and restless? He told her he felt that way, too. She was 12 and he said he was a little older (mid-40s if she knew the truth) and maybe she wouldn't like him just because of that. Of course not, she said, you always make me laugh with your jokes. Did the boy seem lonely and isolated? The predator was always there to listen, interested in the same things as the boy, careful not to bring up sex before the time was right.

In the end, though, the predator isn't satisfied with just talking, Lanning and other say. In July, 2004, for example, Brett J. Mondak was sentenced in U.S. District Court in Kansas on charges of sexual exploitation of a minor. Mondak, a 32-year-old man, traveled all the way from Pennsylvania to Kansas to have sex with a 14-year-old Shawnee boy he met in a chat room on the Internet. He brought with him a digital camera, a lap top, a cell phone and gifts for the child. He filmed their first encounter and he would have met with the boy for a second time if an observant police officer had not noticed the boy waiting outside in bad weather for Mondak to pick him up.

Mondak's case is the kind of thing investigators have seen many times before. As we stand here today, for instance, there is a child predator on the FBI's Ten Most Wanted Fugitives List. His name is Richard Steve Goldberg and he is wanted for sexual exploitation of children (production of child pornography); unlawful flight to avoid prosecution; lewd acts upon a child; and

possession of child pornography.

Today's indictments

The indictments I am announcing today include examples of many of the things I've talked about already.

- Child pornography collections made up of hundreds of images obtained from the Internet and stored on computer.
- Images of children as young as infants being sexually abused. Images of preschoolers with semen on their faces.
- Photos of children being subjected to bondage and masochism in a sexual context.
- Photos of a naked 12-year-old girl taken here in Kansas by an adult male who was well known to her and her family.

Awareness is the key to protecting our children

What can we do in addition to vigorous investigation and prosecution? What can we do to prevent our children from becoming victims? Recognizing the danger is the first step. The fact is that most children, teenagers and parents are not sufficiently informed about the dangers and possible repercussions of releasing personal information to, or agreeing to meet, individuals encountered online. Investigators have documented cases in which officers posing as teenagers were able to quickly and easily set up meetings with youngsters. In one case it took an officer only 45 minutes to set up a meeting with a 13-year-old girl. She returned home after the officer spoke with her and her parents about online safety.

How many people realize that most successful prosecutions against sexual predators started with citizen complaints, not undercover operations? Law enforcement officers need help from the public to keep children safe. And every parent needs to know this, Lanning says: Most American children who appear in child pornography were not abducted. They were talked into posing for pictures or videos by an offender and most of them already knew that offender.

Do your children know how to stay safe on the Internet? Here's rule No. 1: Don't give out personal information about yourself, your family situation, your school, your telephone number or your address to people you meet on the Internet.

Have you told your children to let you know if they see anything that makes them uncomfortable

on the Internet? Have you told them never to agree to get together with someone they meet on the Internet without talking to you first? Have you told them not to respond to messages that are suggestive, obscene, and belligerent or make them feel uncomfortable? Have you told them not to send a picture of themselves over the Internet without checking with you first? Have you given your children rules for using the Internet such as the time of day they can be online, the amount of time and the places they are allowed to visit?

Do you know how much time your child spends on the Internet? Do you know if your child has seen pornography on the Web? Have you told your children that chat rooms are probably the most dangerous area on the Internet? Have you told them to never say anything in a chat room that they wouldn't say in front of you?

If you want information about how to keep your children safe, there's plenty available. Start with www.cybertipline.com. If you want to report child pornography or any other crimes against children in Wichita and Sedgwick County, you can call the Missing and Exploited Child Unit at (316) 337-6552. Or you can call the Cyber Tipline at 1-800-843-5678.

Whatever you do, don't stick your head in the sand. There's a problem. It's growing. And it won't go away by itself.

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